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United States Senate

April 2, 2020

Administrator Jovita Carranza
Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator Carranza:

I am writing you to urge you to ensure that rural electric cooperatives are eligible to participate in the Paycheck Protection Program. In Montana, these small cooperatives are literally keeping the lights on in our rural communities, and they need assistance to retain their workforce.

Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help protect those on the front lines of this emergency, and lend economic stability to employees and employers in impacted industries. Electric Cooperatives are specifically recognized as eligible for Economic Income Disaster Loans. I encourage you to ensure that electric cooperatives are also included as eligible participants in the Paycheck Protection Program, which allows for nonprofit organizations, veterans organizations, and others who would not normally qualify for Small Business Administration loans.

Most rural electric cooperatives employ fewer than 500 people, though they have had limited opportunities to qualify for past SBA loan programs that target businesses organized for profit. Now, as these small utilities work to keep the power flowing to rural communities and their employees perform essential work, we need to ensure that these cooperatives have the financial assistance they need to continue operating.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I stand ready to work with you on implementation of the CARES Act however I can.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

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